

## IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH TASK-BASED LEARNING AT SMPN SECOND GRADE

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### Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah terdapat peningkatan kemampuan membaca siswa menggunakan teknik Task-Based Learning, dan apa masalah yang dihadapi siswa dalam menggunakan teknik tersebut. Peneliti menggunakan desain pre-test dan post-test dalam penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada peningkatan dalam kemampuan membaca siswa setelah diajar menggunakan teknik Task-Based Learning. Data tersebut menunjukkan bahwa nilai rata-rata post-test (68.00) lebih tinggi dibanding nilai rata-rata pre-test (59.17) dengan peningkatan 8.83. Dapat dikatakan bahwa teknik Task-Based Learning meningkatkan kemampuan membaca siswa. Masalah yang dihadapi oleh siswa adalah terbatasnya waktu dan masih bingung dalam menggunakan tugas pembuatan daftar dalam teknik Task-Based Learning.

The purposes of this research were to determine whether there was an improvement of students' reading comprehension through Task-Based Learning technique and what problems were faced by the students in this technique. Researcher used a pre-test and post-test design in this research. The result of the research showed that there was an improvement in students' reading comprehension after being taught using Task-Based Learning technique. The result showed that students' mean score of post-test (68.00) was higher than mean score of pre-test (59.17) with 8.83 gain score. It can be said that Task-Based Learning technique improved students' reading comprehension. Problems that were faced by the students were time limitation and still had confused of using listing task in Task-Based Learning technique.

**Keywords:** *reading comprehension, task-based learning technique, listing task.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesian Department of National Education has declared English as the first foreign language learn from elementary school to senior high school. There are four kinds of language skills to be mastered in learning English namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, English teachers have to use appropriate technique like Task Based Learning to develop the students' language skill especially in reading.

In school, the students are expected to read information which is mostly written in English. This is based on fact that reading dominates the teaching materials in almost English text book. The current English Curriculum states that junior high school students should be able to use the language in informational level that is, being able to access knowledge by the language skills. Therefore, reading skill should be paid more attention to achieve the level.

In reality, the students at junior high school level still has problem in comprehending the text because they are not able to identify the ideas in reading text that they have read. There are several factors that cause the students get difficulties in comprehending the text: 1). They are not interested in participating reading class, 2). They have limited amounts of vocabulary, 3). They are lazy to read the text, 4). They get difficulties to understand the text, and 5). They do not have good knowledge in reading skill.

As a teacher of English, we should be creative to find some ways, choose an appropriate technique, and uses an approach to involve the students reading activities and to provide a comprehensible material.

During the pre-observation at the second grade of SMPN 10 Bandar Lampung on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2014, it is found that almost 70% students of SMPN 10 Bandar Lampung has low ability in reading. It is proved by the statement from one of English teacher of SMPN 10 Bandar Lampung. She says that generally, the students have difficulty in comprehending an English reading text. The students have difficulty in finding the main idea of passage with long sentences. In addition to find the main idea, they have difficult to understand specific information, to make inference, to identify reference, and to identify the meaning of vocabulary in the reading text. It could be seen from their reading comprehension test scores which are mostly lower than the minimal mastery criterion (KKM) of that school.

It is also found out that, the cause of problem might be from the teacher. After asking some students, it is found that the teacher still uses a common technique in almost every teaching and learning process. The teacher just asks the students to read certain text in the students' exercise book, and then she asks them to do the exercises following the text. The monotonous process of learning makes the students feel bored to learn.

In order to minimize the problem above, the researcher focuses on how to create situation where the students can involve and enjoy their learning process. The researcher assumes that there should be some suitable technique in teaching reading which could motivate the students to read all text so, they could understand the information. The researcher uses a technique named Task Based Learning in teaching reading and an approach of reading comprehension to

motivate the students read all the text so they get useful information. Task Based Learning is used for a purpose of helping the students improve their language skills.

There are several previous studies which have been conducted by some researchers. First, Ariyani (2011) investigates that there is improvement of the students' reading comprehension by using Task Based Learning at the second year of SMPN 11 Surakarta. The result of the research shows that:

1. Task Based Learning gives many improvements of students' reading comprehension which includes:
  - a. The students get easy in comprehending English text.
  - b. The students could identify main idea, detail information, reference, vocabularies, and the generic structure of the reading text easily. The improvement of students' reading comprehension could be seen from the mean score of pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2. The mean score of pre-test conducts before research was 5.6. The mean score of post-test 1 of the first cycle was 6.35 and the mean score of post-test 2 of second cycle was 7.58.
2. Task Based Learning give advantages in the teaching learning process which includes:
  - a. The atmosphere of the classroom is alive and interesting.
  - b. The students' participation in class was high, they have a willing to participate in class activities.
  - c. The students are more active.

Second, Iranmehr, et al (2011) find that Task Based Instruction could have significant effect on improving the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) reading comprehension of Iranian university students which involve 75 and 65 students majoring chemistry at Damghan University and Sharood University of Technology. According to this research, it shows that  $t(139) = -0.92$ , there are no statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups in pre-test, but  $t(138) = -7.85$  indicates that mean score of experimental group is more than the mean score of the control group in post-test which is statistically significant. Therefore, it could be concluded that there is no difference between two groups before treatment but after instructing via Task Based Learning Teaching in experiment group and conventional method in control group, mean score of the experimental group promotes significantly more than control group. Based on this research, the following pedagogical implications might be presented: (1). Task Based Language Teaching, which focuses on the ability to perform a task or activity and not on the explicit teaching of grammatical rules or on vocabulary memorization and has attract the attention of many researchers, language instructors, and syllabus designers, can be an innovative alternative for university ESP classroom in Iranian context. (2). The instructors' observation reveals that procedures use in the experimental group trigger off students to participate more actively in discussions and devotes more attention and interested in the topic. (3). There is no doubt that the current status of ESP in Iran as well as many other EFL contexts seriously suffers from the available textbooks. (4). The researcher can use action research as a practical and user-friendly research which its main purpose is improving teaching and learning.

Third, Suprayoga, et al (2013) investigated there are an improvement of the students' reading comprehension by using Task Based Language Teaching at the third year of SMAN 1 Srengat, Blitar. The improvement of the students' reading comprehension is shown by the increasing number of students who achieves 10 point in cycle 2. In cycle 1, 14 out of 30 students (46.67%) achieve 10 point. In Cycle 2, 27 out of 30 students (90.00%) achieve 10 point. Meanwhile the criterion of success stated that the research is categorized to be successful if at least 60% students achieved 10 point. This meant the criterion of success is fulfilled. The research is successfully conducted. Finally, on the basis of the findings, some suggestions for the English teachers and the future researchers are made. First, English teachers are suggested to use Task Based Language Teaching in teaching reading. Second, in using Task-Based Language Teaching, the teachers have to focus on the followings aspects: how to arrange the lesson plans, how to choose the appropriate reading tasks, how to present the tasks, how to give feedback, and how to assess. Third, teachers have to consider reading as a process to reach the expect outcome. Teachers could provide hints to help them or guide them to find the correct answer.

Based on previous research, the researchers have successful investigated on teaching learning process through Task Based Learning. Therefore, by applying Task Based Learning, it is hoped that teaching learning process of reading will be more active so it can improve the students' reading comprehension.

The researcher formulates the problem as follows:

1. Is there any improvement of students' reading comprehension after being taught through Task-Based Learning in terms of macro skills?
2. What problems are faced by the students in learning reading comprehension through Task-Based Learning?

## **METHOD**

The researcher used one group pre-test and post-test design (Hatch and Farhady, 1982:20) in which it was intended to investigate whether there was an improvement of the students' reading comprehension through Task Based Learning. Pre-test was given to the students in order to measure the students' reading comprehension before treatment and post-test was conducted to find the students' reading comprehension after being taught through Task-Based Learning.

The population of this research was the second year students of SMPN 10 Bandar Lampung. This research employed two classes; one as the experimental class and the other for try out class. The researcher applied the classes by using random sampling (lottery).

The instrument of this research was objective reading test in form of pre-test and post-test. The researcher chose multiple choice items form since its marking was rapid, simple, and most importantly reliable, not subjective or influence by the markers' judgment (Heaton 1975:135). This research used two instruments namely pre-test, post-test in order to answer the research questions. There were one pre-test and one post-test in this research. Between the two tests there were treatments held in three meetings. In this research, the learning materials were

focused on descriptive text reading comprehension. All students were taught to comprehend the text by using Task Based Learning technique.

The procedures of this research were first, determining the research problems. Second, determining the sample and population. Third, administering try out test. Fourth, administering the pre-test. Fifth, conducting the treatments. Sixth, administering the post-test. Seventh, administering the questionnaire. The last, analyzing the test result. The analysis of the results was aimed to determine whether there was an improvement of students' reading comprehension using Task Based Learning technique or not after treatment. The researcher analyzed the data by using SPSS.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher used pre-test and post-test as the instruments to collect the data. The test was reading comprehension test.

### **Result of the Pre-test**

The purpose of conducting the pre-test was to identify the students' reading comprehension before the treatment. The researcher used statistical computation with SPSS 17.0 for Windows to analyze the scores on the pre-test and post-test in the experimental class. The total score of the pre-test was 1420. The mean score of the pre-test was 59.17; the highest score was 76; the lowest score was 40; the median was 60; and the mode was 60. The distribution of the students' pre-test scores in the experimental class was explained below:



### Statistics

pretest

N	Valid	24
	Missing	0
Mean		59.17
Median		60.00
Mode		60
Std. Deviation		9.867
Variance		97.362
Range		36
Minimum		40
Maximum		76
Sum		1420

### Distribution of the Students' Scores of the Pre-test in the Experimental Class

pretest

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 40	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
44	1	4.2	4.2	8.3
48	2	8.3	8.3	16.7
52	4	16.7	16.7	33.3
56	3	12.5	12.5	45.8
60	5	20.8	20.8	66.7
64	1	4.2	4.2	70.8
68	3	12.5	12.5	83.3
72	2	8.3	8.3	91.7
76	2	8.3	8.3	100.0
Total	24	100.0	100.0	

### Distribution of Students' Pre-test Achievement in Each Aspect of Reading Comprehension

No	Aspect of reading comprehension	Total Answered	Total Question	N	Maximum Answered	Percentage
1.	Identifying main idea	73	5	24	120	60.83 %
2.	Identifying specific information	105	7	24	168	62.50 %
3.	Determining references	53	4	24	96	55.21 %
4.	Making inferences	54	4	24	96	56.25 %
5.	Understanding vocabularies	70	5	24	120	58.33 %

The total students who have answered correctly for identifying main idea were 73 or 60.83%; identifying specific information 105 or 62.50 %; determining references 53 or 55.21%; making inferences 54 or 56.25%; and understanding vocabularies 70 or 58.33 %.

### **Result of the Post-test**

The total scores of the post-test in the experimental class was 1632. The mean of the post-test was 68; the highest score was 88; the lowest score was 48; the median was 68; and the mode was 72. The distribution of the students' post-test score in the experimental class was explained below:

#### **Statistics**

posttest

N	Valid	24
	Missing	0
Mean		68.00
Median		68.00
Mode		72
Std. Deviation		10.681
Variance		114.087
Range		40
Minimum		48
Maximum		88
Sum		1632

### Distribution of the Students' Scores of the Post-test in the Experimental Class

posttest					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	48	1	4.2	4.2	4.2
	52	1	4.2	4.2	8.3
	56	3	12.5	12.5	20.8
	60	3	12.5	12.5	33.3
	64	2	8.3	8.3	41.7
	68	3	12.5	12.5	54.2
	72	4	16.7	16.7	70.8
	76	3	12.5	12.5	83.3
	80	1	4.2	4.2	87.5
	84	2	8.3	8.3	95.8
	88	1	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	24	100.0	100.0	

### Distribution of Students' Post-test Achievement in Each Aspect of Reading Comprehension

No	Aspect of reading comprehension	Total Answered	Total Question	N	Maximum Answered	Percentage
1.	Identifying main idea	83	5	24	120	69.17 %
2.	Identifying specific information	121	7	24	168	72.02 %
3.	Determining references	61	4	24	96	63.54 %
4.	Making inferences	63	4	24	96	65.63 %
5.	Understanding difficult vocabularies	80	5	24	120	66.67 %

The total students who have answered correctly for identifying main idea were 83 or 69.17%; identifying specific information 121 or 72.02%; determining references 61 or 63.54%; making inferences 63 or 65.63%; and understanding vocabularies 80 or 66.67 %.

### Improvement of the Students' in Reading Comprehension

The total score of the pre-test to the post-test has increased from 1420 up to 1632.

There was an improvement 212 points. The mean was from 59.17 up to 68.00.

There was an increase 8.83. It can be seen from the table below:

### Improvement from the Pre-test to the Post-test

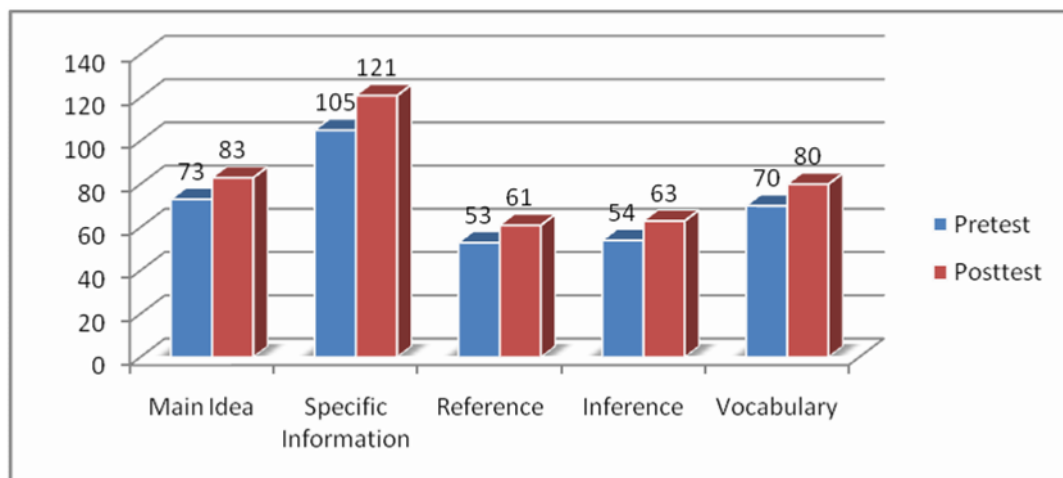
Mean		The Increase
Pre-test	Post-test	
59.17	68.00	8.83

### Improvement from Pre-test to Post-test for Each Aspect of Reading Comprehension

No	Aspect of reading comprehension	Total Answered		Increase	Percentage		Increase
		Pre-test	Post-test		Pre-test	Post-test	
1	Identifying Main Idea	73	83	10	60.83%	69.17%	8.43%
2	Identifying Specific Information	105	121	16	62.50%	72.02%	9.52%
3	Determining References	53	61	8	55.21%	63.54%	8.33%
4	Making Inferences	54	63	9	56.25%	65.63%	9.38%
5	Understanding Difficult Vocabularies	70	80	10	58.33 %	66.67%	8.34%

There were five aspects which were measured in this research, that was identifying main idea, identifying specific information, determining reference, making inference, and understanding difficult vocabulary. This table above showed the improvement of each aspects of reading comprehension achieved by the students of SMPN 10 Bandar Lampung. It was also shown in the following graph:

**Graph 1. Improvement of the Students' Score of Five Aspects of Reading Comprehension.**



Based on the graph above, the highest increase was in identifying specific information with the increase was about 16 points, in which the total score of identifying specific information in pre-test was 105 and it became 121 in post-test. It was caused by discussing helps the students to get specific information to share in their group. In other hand, the lowest increase was in determining references. The improvement was only 8 points. The total score in pre-test was 53 and in post-test it became 61.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In reference to the results of data analysis and discussions, the researcher draws the conclusions as follows:

1. There is an improvement of the students' reading comprehension after being taught through Task Based Learning technique at the second grade of SMPN 10 Bandar Lampung. This can be seen from the difference of the students' mean score of pre-test which improve from 59.17 up to 68.00 in the post-test with gain of 8.83 point. The result of hypothesis test shows that the hypothesis of this research was accepted ( $p < 0.05$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).
2. According to the questionnaire, there are some problems faces by the students during learning reading comprehension through Task Based Learning technique.
  - a. Limitation time. Some of them say that the time limit is too short to give them a chance to complete the tasks. They have difficulty to write their listing task because of their problems in grammar.
  - b. The researcher uses listing as the task of Task Based Learning technique. After applying this task, the students still confused on

choosing information that important to make a list or not. They still have confused which one that is needed to be listed.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Referring the conclusions above, the researcher would like to propose some suggestions as follows:

- a. In this research, it is found that determining references need to be paid more attentions since it is the least affected during the application of Task Based Learning. This can be done by giving more activities so the students can avoid repletion of words or phrase of the text.
- b. The result of questionnaire shows that the problems of the students are time limitation and still confused on using listing task. The teacher has to be explicitly taught to the students, modeled to the students, and practiced to the students about listing task. The teacher might start the lesson by asking several questions which are related to the text first in order to activate their background knowledge which facilitate them in understanding the text and mastering its procedure to make the students able to maximize the time limit in the task.

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